

Testimony for expungement in S.2820

Dear Chair Michlewitz, Chair Cronin, Vice Chair Garlick, and Vice Chair Day,

My name is Jose Pizzini and I live in Lawrence.

The Massachusetts Senate's passage of a sweeping racial justice and police reform bill includes a critical clarification to the existing expungement law that would create additional opportunities for people like me to expunge their past life. Thousands of people like me miss out on opportunities for success because they are judged based on past criminal records -- even when the charges on those records have long been dismissed -- and this bill can change that

A criminal record should not be a lifelong sentence that defines who we are as people and creates consistent barriers to education, housing, and employment. The charges against me have all been dismissed, yet I was just rejected from a job that I have been dreaming about because my background check still brings them up.

The Senate bill makes the important distinction allowing for multiple court appearances and differentiates between dismissals and convictions. The bill also recognizes this expansion as a matter of racial justice -- in Massachusetts, Black youth are three times as likely to get arrested than their white peers and Black individuals are six times more likely to go to jail than white people, despite making up just 7.5% of our population.

Young people are often racially targeted, from arrest to sentencing, and expungement is the second chance that so many of us deserve. As we near the end of a busy legislative session, I urge the House to take up this issue.

*Jose Pizzini is an Organizer at UTEC Inc. and lives in Lawrence, MA*